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HO
SUBJECT: HONDURAS PASSES A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Classified By: Ambassador Charles Ford, reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (U) Summary. On September 10, the GOH publicized a decree in the national Gazette announcing the adoption of a National Security Strategy. The strategy has six main objectives (listed below) which now include counterterrorism work as an objective, and stresses regional and international cooperation. The National Council on Defense and Security (Consejo Nacional de Defensa y Seguridad) will be re-invigorated and tasked with coordinating not only the interpretation of the strategy, but also its dispersal to the general public. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On September 10, the GOH published a decree in the national Gazette announcing the adoption of a National Security Strategy by the President of the Republic and his Council of Ministers. The Embassy has been working with the GOH for over a year to devise and implement a strategy. Minister of Defense, Aristides Mejia, told us that the first version, issued several months ago, was shot down by several ministers who did not understand either its scope or its purpose. The MOD then convened a working group of mostly retired military officers to develop a new strategy, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in September.

¶3. (U) The Strategy has as its main objectives (informal translation):

¶A. Strengthen the Rule of Law.
¶B. Protect the life and integrity of all people and their property.
¶C. Prevent and combat: terrorism; trafficking of drugs, arms and people; corruption; money laundering. Prevent, control, and rehabilitate gangs.
¶D. Systematically consolidate and strengthen the control of land, air and maritime borders.
¶E. Strengthen support systems and increase regional and international cooperation.
¶F. Transform and modernize the Security Institutions in order to face the challenges of the 21st century.

¶4. (C) Food security has been removed as a responsibility of the Armed Forces, although the designers said that within objective B it is contemplated that the responsible government institutions would be responsible not just for protecting the physical integrity of people, but also promoting general human development. Counter terrorism,

which was not mentioned in the first version, has been added as the third objective, which greatly strengthens the document. The importance of regional and international cooperation has also been stressed in the fifth objective.

¶5. (C) The MOD hopes to re-invigorate the National Council on Defense and Security (Consejo Nacional de Defensa y Seguridad) which will be the implementing organ of this strategy. It will contain members from civil society and many different government institutions including the Armed Forces, the Police, the Public Ministry, etc. The strategy will be presented to the council as a final document, and it will then be tasked with determining a public relations strategy. The MOD said many Hondurans think of the 1980's and human rights violations when they hear the words "defense and security," so they will have to carefully define these concepts to them. The MOD also opined that Hondurans do not have a well developed sense of national identity and do not have fully formed ideas about rule of law, so they will see this document as unnecessary and not understand how it affects them. So the council needs to first educate the general public, and then determine how to publicize the strategy and increase general acceptance.

¶6. (C) Comment: We see the document as an excellent framework for developing sound long-term policies for the GOH. The structure, wording and scope of this National Security Strategy are very similar to the U.S. National Security Strategy. It is evident that they used the U.S. version as a framework to develop their own. The undesirable sections contained in the first version have been removed, and an extremely helpful mention of counterterrorism as an objective has been added. We expect to see them next develop a National Defense Strategy, and finally move to the detailed level of a National Military Strategy. During the briefing, the Ambassador also reminded the MOD of the importance of informing the donors and international organizations about the strategy in order to better coordinate funding and programs. In short, we have achieved one of the eight bilateral objectives put forth by the Ambassador to President Zelaya in June 2007. End comment.

FORD